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PINING FOR THE MORROW

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JAWAHAR LAL SAROOR

Translated by :
R. K. BHARTI

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With Regards and respect
to
Dr. Ratan Lal Skant
30/9/2001.

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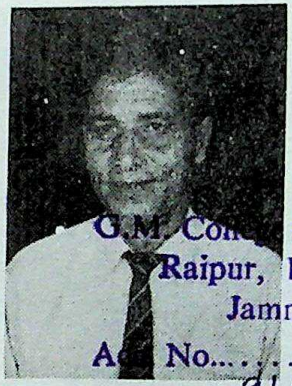
PINING FOR THE MORROW

(Poems)

JAWAHAR LAL SAROOR



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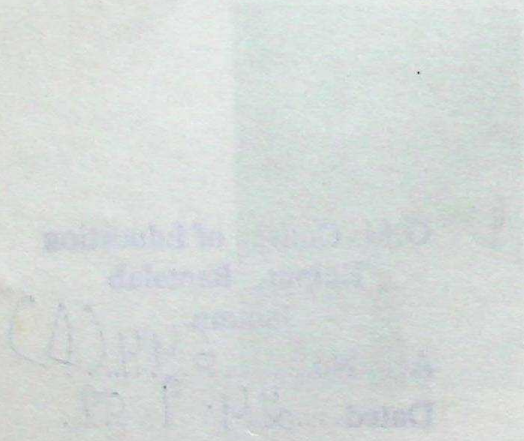

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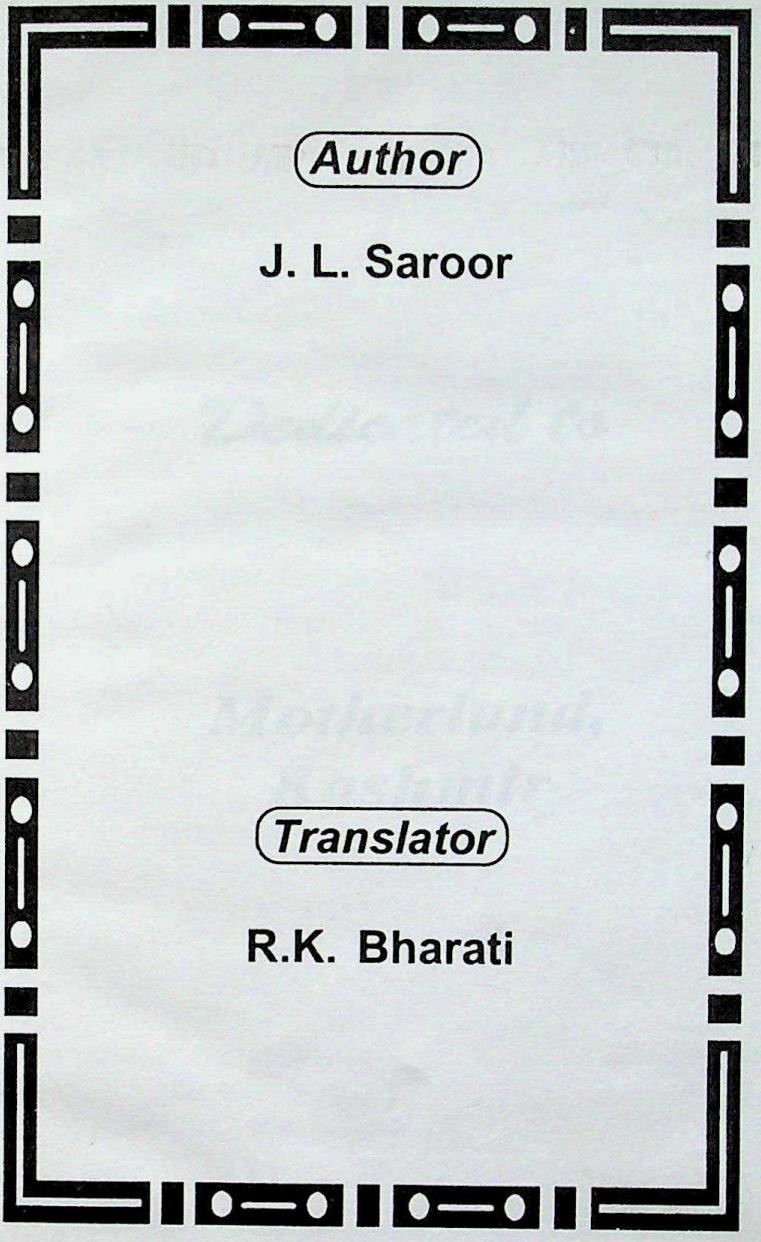

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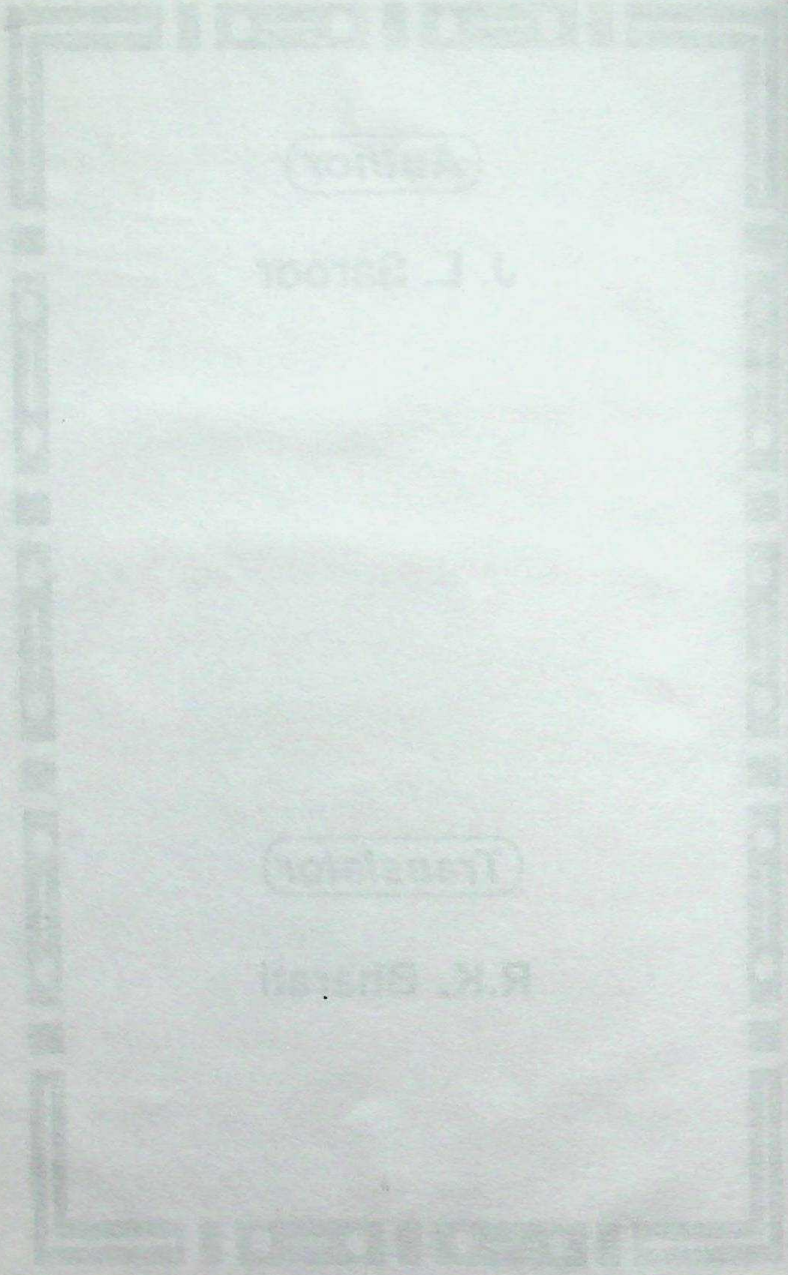

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Dedicated to

Motherland,
Kashmir

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FOREWORD

This volume is welcome as a well-attempted literary translation of Jawahar Lal Saroor's Kashmiri poems into English. By now, he has already attained recognition as a competent poet on the basis of the three volumes of Kashmiri verse he has authored: *Loluk Sada, Paghach ash* and *Vajd*. Some of his short stories, in Urdu and Kashmiri, too have appeared in prestigious journals and anthologies brought out in the country. As a talented and promising Kashmiri scholar he has participated in a number of literary seminars and workshops. The present volume bears testimony to his keen interest, as a creative writer, in reaching out to a larger readership across the country and beyond through the translations of his poems selected from the broad corpus of his Kashmiri verse.

The main motivation and inspiration behind the poems brought together in the present volume is the original author's love of the valley of Kashmir, his concern about the turmoil there, that led to his displacement from his homeland over a decade back---the sacred land of seers and sages well-known as *Reshi Vaar.* He views the situation as a sane human being, at once detached and sympathetic, which explains why there is no trace of any personal rancour or bitterness against any one in the poems.

The poet's deep love of all that is cherishable about Kashmir---the composite cultural heritage, the natural beauty of the countryside, the brooks and springs, the

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snow-clad mountains, the charming forests the beautiful song-birds, the Aharbal water fall, *Lal Vaakh* and *Nunda Rishi's Shrukhs*---finds appropriate poetic expression in the original poems, which is matched reasonably well by what is reflected in their translated versions. What I like about Jawaharlal Saroor's Kashmiri poems is--his language use--his verse is charmingly simple and literary at the same time; he draws upon the current Kashmiri idiom as far as possible and does not sound verbose or academic. He achieves his poetic effects through the use of image and symbol.

The translator, **R.K. Bharati,** has kept close to the original text and captured the "substance" of the poems; yet I wouldn't consider the translations just 'literal'. This is evident from the fact that he leaves out a detail here and there and he does not reproduce the entire text. While deviating slightly, strictly speaking, from the original free-verse form (which becomes inevitable in translation), he has made sure that he retains near English equivalents of the Kashmiri vocabulary items crucial to the essential content of the poems. On the whole, the translation are neatly, accomplished with a sense of proportion and precision. A welcome volume, that makes pleasant reading.

A.N. Dhar

Former Prof. & Head,
Dept. of English, University of Kashmir

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PREFACE

Poetry is the expression of inner feelings. Saroor, like all exiled Kashmiri Pandits, has felt the shock too severe to bear.

Saroor conveys this trauma in his poems hoping against hope that it would soften the militants and their supporters and the dead concept of Kashmiriyat would somehow revive itself. He records his shock in poems like "Speak Oriole Speak!" *(Poshe noolo wan che wan).*

Poetry is the mirror of contemporary social order and Saroor has done justice to this conception and recorded his reaction in his poems.

I, as a translator, tried to remain as close to his idiom as possible but then there are no equivalents to many Kashmiri words such as *'Malyun-ropeh talyun', Aadi, dekeh tikeh, damaneh, Zuwal maal* etc. The translator is compelled to use nearer English idiom. It is my opinion that literal translation conveying the original sense, is better than to translate the so called "essence" because it is not possible to arrive at the same "essence" as felt by the poet.

I would like to record that if there is any excellence in the poems it is that of Saroor and if there are any errors and shortcomings those are mine.

I thank **Miss Simi Bhat** who painstakingly composed the text, designed the cover and layout of the book for which she deserves all praise.

I hope Saroor will reach out to whole world through this translation and thus the trauma of Kashmiri Pandits also.

Jammu, May 28, 2001

R.K. Bharati
Senior Journalist and writer

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Between the devil and the deep sea

A wild bird came down panting, towards plains.

The tricksters looked jubilant in the courtyards

"After a long time a game

Came our way."

On hearing this the wild bird

Was perplexed,

It found itself

Between the devil and the deep sea.

****

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Tale of the king

Heavy snow should fall again

That all movement would stop,

We would lie near the granny in the evening

And would ask her to tell us a tale of the king

She would laugh and say:

Don't you hear the noise?

The ogress is searching for a hideout,

She is hanging on to the verandah.

****

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The raven

The street corners were blocked with obstacles

Fire was raging on roads,

Some were atop the electric poles,

Moving like ravens.

* * * * * * *

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Affection

I can't boast of my earnings

I am destitute without substance

Neither do I tell beads,

Nor do I know meditation.

I give love, day and night

To mine own and the strangers.

My religion is only love,

I find solace in it.

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Devotion

I saw

Sparkling in moonlight

Behind snowy peaks

And over the mountains

A snow mound holding to its chest

Oma and *Shanker* blended into one.

I seek Him through the windows.

Perhaps the pair of pigeons will fly now

The sins and curses of my births will be washed away.

I shall find salvation and

My devotion will bear fruit.

****

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Remembrance

I recollect those days of youth

When we would meet at the brook

When the *Vishow* would be bustling

The full moon would rise with

measured steps

The springtide would be ecstatic

Villages and cities would be

perfumed by the breeze.

Whenever you would move your lips.

The sweet verses of *Lal Ded* would flow freely

I still remember it was the New year's day

You were holding salix in the corner

of your head scarf

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Mustard fields were rejoicing on your lips

You were watching keenly the *kulim* flowers

Narcissus had adorned your neck

Your dishevelled hair was emitting musk

Cobra-like hanging on to your breast

I was watching keenly the Ahrabal fall

It was gushing forth frenzied.

Meeting after a long time I had hoped

I would look at you and pour out my

heart to you.

But my ambitions remained unfulfilled

My sweet dreams were dashed to

the ground that very moment

Only a remembrance lingers.

****

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Hope

The *Yaksh* is whining on the soot hill

It has snowed just a while earlier

The darkness has spread so much

That it swallowed even the compounds.

A column of clouds has become arrogant

The stars were lost from the edge of the sky

The thunders proclaimed through the village.

He perspired on hearing it.

We fulfilled the desires of spring in winter

We called the frost, blooming flowers.

Narcissus will bloom after *Phagun*

Then the pilgrims will

Throng the shrines.

****

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Light

In the chimney room

I am gasping

I feel much of the night has passed

It was raining in torrents outside

It was sweltering heat inside

An army of ants had emerged

And spread all over the walls.

A sparrow like lizard

Did I spot on my pillow. I gasped

Crest-fallen

Perhaps some terrifying fiend.

I cried instinctively

I would return to my home

O, God, let there be light very soon.

****

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Misplaced Justice

Fire had left nothing untouched

It is a long time back

When they dug the sites and saw

Skeletons and idols coming out of the foundation.

Idols as if with sewn lips

Skeletons lamenting what was their fault

Some one had to get freedom

and some one else was killed for it.

****

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In this valley of seers

Human species is tongue-tied

The traces of footsteps trampled over

The night has spread all over

Her breasts full of milk, tingling

No one is there to care for the Spring

What a beautiful flower has wilted in the garden!

Some one has robbed this valley of saints

Somebody has stolen her smiling posture.

The birds are fleeing

Water has swept away the nests

A pair of pigeons on the roof edge

Shedding copious tears

Fairies have forgotten singing melodies

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The autumn wind has stolen into gardens

Cascades stand still

The stones have forgotten rattling

The market is engulfed in powder smoke

Crossing bridges is forbidden

Otherwise when had it thundered

in starry skies till now?

Come, sit, we shall not meet again

Who will care for whom, those days

have gone

The fire of jealousy is raging

Only quarrels have to be settled now

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The Curse

Riverines dried up and springs lost

their spouts much earlier

Snow mountains are empty,

The Ahrabal fall has fallen asleep

The meadows emit burning smell all over

The pigeon has put its head under its wing

Crest-fallen, it has forgotten calling *'yahoo'*

My village pavilion is sad

The chinar shade is hotter than fire

The willow groves autumn-struck everywhere

The almond blossoms destroyed by

early spring hailstorm

Man has lost humanity

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The market has downed its shutters

much earlier

Roads look like prowling, open

mouthed pythons

Talk of brotherhood seems a sin

Birds are forbidden warbling

The starlings have gathered on balcony

Some one has stolen the melody of oriole

The wild flowers have aged in youth

The face of Pir Panjal has blackened.

The breast of *Vitasta* has frozen;

it licks its lips

O, who has cursed the sacred valley today?

****

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Vicissitudes

Split time, uneasy vision, restless heart
The lamps of yearning extinguished
Pitch dark night
When it comes to mind
God knows why my desires numb
This heart should not freeze
like a cold icicle.
Who knows how many gullibles like me;
Ignorant like me,
Will be sewing the slit hearts with weak thread.
The rose will not hide its colour,
Narcissus will not bloom in winter days,
The pine will not dim its verdure,
Try how the autumn wind may.
This is love; that is mange;
This a sparkle, that a conflagration.
The love surges when someon's
yearning becomes intense.

****

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The man

The sage of the ascetic grove
Or some god has come down
After traversing the skies
A man but with changed looks
With the gold of rising and setting sun
In his bowl.
The nectar of the lake of knowledge in his lap
Went on making men drink
A man
Who heaped up handfuls of pearls
Up and down going embankment
It was so named
This is his attire
Who talked of light through the
darkness
A simple and pure man
Went on opening doors of life
It is his day, today,
Who was given some name at his birth

****

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Holding in the mind

The ice idol of human size

A naked ascetic of Amarnath

The Ganges in his matted hair,

trident in hand

The *Vasuki* round his neck

A pair of pigeons flitting around

Sometimes lost to sight.

The snow clad mountain peak

Sparkling in moonlight

A multitude come with faith and devotion

Offering flowers on the *Shiva lingam*

Circumambulating, they would weep

While inwardly reciting His name.

****

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Once in a blue moon

Children are making tumultuous
noise everywhere
That the white birds would come
down from the skies
Sometimes dancing in pairs
Sometimes alone.
White blanket spread in the compound
Trees look like wearing turbans.
A, multitude of people came down to market
And would congrat one another
That the blue moon comes but once.
Amarnath has again come to me
here today.
My native snowy Kashmir has
come to me here
Zala and *Sharika* have come to me
Ragina has come to me with new snow
The *Vitasta* will be born in Udhampur
The snow bird has come with this message
That the blue moon has appeared
once again

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My yearning for the sacred valley
was fulfilled today
I distributed new snow among neighbours
I made a snow-man in my courtyard
I told *Saba*, my child, to put nose and ears to it,
Put a red chilly between the lips.
My children asked if this was called Kashmir
But the granny told them this was our greatness
This was our wealth
Which has come to us after a decade
of aloofness
I have to observe the ritual
I have to put snow into the *Watakh* pitcher
I feel my youth has returned
My blood is again tingling today
This all was a new play for the children
They forgot all the burning heat waves
And made snow balls in the courtyard
With frozen hands telling each other
The blue moon has appeared once again.

(Note: This poem was written in Udhampur when for the first time it snowed there on January 14, 2000)

❋❋❋❋❋❋❋

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Past Heritage

The black clouds engulfed the earth

The darkness spread and swallowed mid-noon

All the old traditions were sullied.

Mountains were dug, the *Vetasta* caught fire

The pages of love poems were

swept away by madness.

Our greatness, the sign of our culture

Every page of history is witness to it.

Poison was mixed with nectar.

As if a tremor struck down piece by piece

Our past wealth and the high peak of *Harmukh*.

****

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Yearning

As the evening shadows embrace,

I too am engulfed in miseries
O, the universe is such like
O, when did the gardens of wishes
bloom here?
O, what a beautiful person died in
sorrow with unfulfilled desires
O, that mansion is engulfed in gloom,
The owl spread its wings and sat high
on roof top.
The whole village was awakened by
the whines of jackals
O, the nightingale once again was in trouble
Alas, it has gone mad, it lost its
peace of mind.
If the blooming rose were not really attractive
It would have soothed its inner heart
by tossing itself on the thorns.
The thrush would never aspire for
spring after missing its voice
O, the fire of love, it got stoked again

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O, that starry sky of yesterday!
How attractive!
It looks like fog of clouds
The very universe has shrunken.
I hit hard at my own aspirations today
O, the whole of the *Dal* got frozen in
summer heat.
It seems moon is delirious
Why did the gardener throw away
the flower buds trampled?
O, is there no end to this night?
No destination?
O, will never the polar star rise again
from behind the mountains?
Will not the caller give early morning
call from the mosque?
Will the conch of the temple stay silent for ever?
Will the tomorrows also be damned as ever?
Will not the meadows have to enjoy the spring?
Will not the hope of Spring bring new
spouts to springs?
Will not the prairie wait for you?

****

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Gazing

Holding the ocean in the eyes
The lips are sealed, what can I tell you?
Neither did we play in youth
Nor ever filled our bowl.
We stayed looking
At rosy bodies
Terror was hovering all over
Who would dare open his mouth
And ask questions?
My garment is white, let you protect it.
Think who can bear the chill of blood
My sacred valley is the heritage of saints
The laughing *Vitasta* is struck dumb
The nectar is saturated with
gunpowder smoke
Flower petals hold poison in their veins.
The spring breeze blows hot.
With fixed gaze I am exploring the sky.
Who knows what is in store for me?

****

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Speak oriole, speak!

Did you pass by my compound
O, oriole, speak?
Did you notice some swallows flitting
Over the gables there?
Was any flower blooming
on the pear tree in my compound?
Has the grapevine near the gate grown bigger?
Do the birds still make a noise there?
Do the starlings gather on the balcony
in the evening?
Did you see any of our neighbours
behind my house?
Did any one there enquire about my welfare?
Do they play tipcat in *Radish field?*
Do they perform *Bhandara* at
Sa'd Sab's shrine as of yore?
Do they rejoice in singing in rice plantation season?
Are the river banks still rough hewn
as of olden days?
Do the pitchers burst in winter chill?
Is meaty knol-khol still available

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the whole winter?
Does any fisherman go to the villages
in cold winter?
Do my brethren sit under the
chinar shade in hot summers?
Does anyone eat kernel-packs
of walnuts as of yore?
Does the *Cherwani* brook roar day and night?
Is the milch cow tethered in the willow shade?
Do the cowboys go with their sheep to riverine?
Don't the tulips feel frightened in wheat fields?
Is the water of *Boni Khod* spring still cool?
Are the neighbouring villages fine?
Do children study in schools?
Do people go to *Chrar* on Thursday nights?
Does anyone light a lamp in the temple?
Is *Dood Ganga* really the same even now?
Does anyone venture near *Ari Lab?*
Speak, O, oriole speak, say something.
If you happen to go to my village
Convey my blessings as a gift to the
footpaths there.

****

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Long live our holy land

Newly wed brides come from the heavens,

Queen of the whole world,

Offering handfuls of nectar,

My parental home, the flowery

meadow,

Which the *Vetasta* waters.

Did not the *Leddar* come down dancing?

The *Vishow* jingles like anklets

The sage sitting at *Neel Nag*

Cherishing and preserving dreams.

The call of unity reverberating,

Lal humming her quartets,

Listen to *Nundlal's* utterances.

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It will soothe your nerves and delight you.

Parbat is holding *Chakreshwar* in its lap

The *Sultan* supporting it from the other side.

The hymns enchant *Kathe-Darwazeh*

Every day

The monastery there and there also

The *Maha Kali* temple.

Those who sought found their desires fulfilled,

They were intoxicated with bliss.

We never discriminated against nor frowned on anyone.

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The ray

The shifting fog spread all over,
Even the deserts lost colour
Some one plucked the feathers of birds
There is smoke sheet spread all over
Cheap is human blood in this city.
Be quiet lest anyone should listen,
Uttering words is an accusation here,
On every stop they look for excuses.
Every day pyres are lit here now
No end to conffins towards *Maleh Khah.*
Which evening did not witness weeping?
Dead bodies now heaped up here.
The willow groves are decaying here.
Struck by autumn wind,
Saffron fields filled with gunpowder.
Chinars withering all over.
The hyenas stalking everywhere.
What will happen to this earth?
It should have a sympathizer
So that it would get a new foundation.
So that all wound say, 'it is a ray of light.'

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In this forest grove

Peace of mind is in this forest grove.
Human species is not arrogant here,
The anklets of fairies jingle here,
The rivulets dance here.
The noise of cities to cities
Thief has not burgled into Nature here.
The prairies full of flowers.
The air is fragrant all over.
Different birds live here,
Like good neighbours.
Peace of mind prevails in this forest grove,
Human species is not arrogant here.
Birds are not on the run here
No one pulls out sparrow nests.
No smell of gunpowder smoke here
No restrictions on roads here
No road blocks here on footpaths,
No latches on gates.
Peace of mind prevails in this forest grove,

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Human species is not arrogant here.
Snow mountains are sparkling here
Reaching out to skies.
The plates of *Harmukh* and *Kaunsar Nag*
Filled with nectar for ascetics here.
It is the beautiful native land
of wild starlings?
The rainbow is decorated with pearls up and down
Peace of mind prevails in this forest grove,
Human species is not arrogant here.
This colourful garden has colourful blossoms
Fragrance wafts everywhere.
Footpaths here are glittering
The dew has decorated the necks
The wild starlings sing in chorus today
The hills and dales exude glitter.
Peace of mind prevails in this forest grove,
Human species is not arrogant here.

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Pining for the morrow

Much time has sneaked away unnoticed

I, a sleepy one, out of my senses,

I scratched my wounds

My spangled attire full of holes.

My eyes turned blood-red, waiting for you.

My youth gambolled away

These the winter days, this the chilly night.

My bearing is unreal without you.

Heart so cold, coldness itself is scared,

If you move your lips even now

You will gather the split mercury

The fairies will sing in chorus,

The rainbow will rise over hills,

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The willow groves will be fragrant

like sandal wood.

The springs will flow from the mind,

Youth will bloom.

The care for the morrow is meaningless,

It is all illusion, tomorrow is unseless scampering

When my attire was torn today

When man lost his existence.

Where to go, the frightening sea is in front,

The burning pyre is at my threshold.

Moments earlier, there was a flowry ground.

Alas, I did not enioy the moment then,

I pined for the uncertain tomorrow.

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Lots to say

Will there be a nightingale singing

on my window sill?

Will I ever hear the cooing of the dove?

Will roses ever bloom in my compound?

Will the spring breeze ever pass from this window?

Will I ever sleep on the moonlit gables in the evenings?

Will the speckled calf gambol in my courtyard once

again?

Will the mustard flowers ever bloom in that field?

Will any neighbour gift a basket

of rumex to us?

Do the mushrooms still sprout in sand dunes?

Are the *acetosa* O, Ahrabal still sold

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in the market of Shopian?

Will I crave for this always now?

Will I never see the snow flakes falling?

Will I never go round Hari Parbat?

Will I never bow at the gate of

Makhdoom Sahib?

What can I say, how much I tell you,

My heart is choked with emotions

I would fly to that abode of Rishis!

And would cool my seared limbs

Under the shady chinars

O, I am forlorn, how can I fly?

High walls have been erected for me over Pir Panjal!

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The boozer

All began to enjoy themselves just a while ago.
Some one thoughtlessly handed over
the goblet to me.
I would like to drink a draught or two
in excuse of revelry.
The thirst itself drives the boozers.
Every one's desire was roused
by this riverine breeze
May there be no end to drinking and
offerings of drinks.
O, I would also drink by the pitcherfulls today,
Would that you were as generous as of yesterday.
May today's sun never set!
May there never be the pitch dark night!
Life lingers on without a draught
like the aged hag,
Otherwise who brought the news

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of the heaven,

Who invented the false scare of the hell

for nothing?

Or else who would be inclined to

abstain?

I resolved to drink in the moonlight today,

I once again filled the cup to the brim,

Once again my life found respite.

Another bottle, which I uncorked just now,

Was emptied, as if water sucked

by the sandy soil.

Still the lips feel thirsty.

I filled another cup to the brim

Once again I forgot the recent sorrows.

I began to start anew

In this I felt some fleeting shadow,

In this I saw a new dimension of life.

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My Crazy dearie

This is my dearie, crazy dearie,

She decorates the flower boughs early,

She bedecks the moon-brow with gold flecks,

She fills the cups with wine,

Half asleep, she decorates earrings,

This is my dearie, crazy dearie

She is a ray sparkling in the dark,

She fondles the lovers.

She enjoys the splendour of pine forests.

Seemingly thirsty, she withstands chilly wind.

This is my dearie, crazy dearie

The *Romesh* flows in a new style today,

She is the full moon, hidden far away,

It is a spring gushing in a new style,

Traversing the mountains,

she is a beautiful riddle.

This is my dearie, crazy dearie.

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She is a dove enjoying spring,
She spreads light of love at every step,
She enchants with her looks,
Sometimes running far away like a fire doll,
This is my dearie, crazy dearie
She has been snatched from the death,
She has been brought artfully,
Her tingling skirt is bedecked with pearls,
She looks like a crazy one.
She is openly mad after me.
I will give her a name and adorn her
with earrings.
Her name is sweetheart, *hoori* like,
She is like a pendant and an earring,
She is beautiful like iris,
She tells me the new secret like a forlorn one.
This is my dearie, crazy dearie

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The Ahrabal fall

I heard the music and lost peace of mind,

Are you the Ahrabal fall?

I sing your song in moonlit nights.

Are you the Ahrabal fall?

You are calling the lover over the boulders,

Playing the pleasing *santoor* of life,

Your melody has sunk into my mind.

Are you the Ahrabal fall?

You tricked the *Kausar* and leapt away,

You came to this place to make the boozers drink,

Your wine has the intoxication of youth.

Are you the Ahrabal fall?

Your cheecks emit light in darknees,

Perplexed black snakes are spread

over your face,

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The lover's fire of love stirs up.

Are you the Ahrabal flal?

Saroor sang your songs to his beloved,

The new flourish and the old go into oblivion

To look, to know and to learn is wisdom.

Are you the Ahrabal fall?

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The winter

The snow bird has today been sent as a
gift by the snow-clad mountains,
The days of autumn are numbered;
The winter will be born soon
The cuckoos flew round their dear
native land today.
The swallows perhaps have been
preparing to migrate,
As if thieves have burgled into the flower
gardens.
The nightgale has gone crazy,
The thrushes have lost melodies,
We will lose nothing, we will be free soon,
Schools will close down when snow
falkes will fall over?

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Many hopefuls like me will be sitting at windows,
Gazing longingly at snow flakes.
The sky is covered with fog;
the universe itself has shrunk,
The sun shivering with cold,
Must have hidden itself somwhere.
When I shall notice rows on that gable
roof tomorrow,
I will recollect that these are perhaps
called icicles.
When the riverside will be covered with
ice sheets all over,
The vengeful cold season will be coming,
grinding its teeth.

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